United Nations S/PV.7108

Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7108th meeting

Monday, 10 February 2014, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Murmokaitė	(Lithuania)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
	Australia	Ms. King
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Errázuriz
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Luxembourg	Mr. Maes
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2014/68)

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14-23102 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Council for the month of February 2014, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Permanent Representative of Jordan, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of January. I am certain I speak for all members of the Council in expressing my deep appreciation to Ambassador Al-Hussein and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the business of the Council last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2014/68)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort him to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to his seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting. On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Zarif, who is joining today's meeting via video teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hashim Thaçi to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/68, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: I wish to take this oportunity to extend my congratulations to the President and all the new members of the Security Council for having been elected to this body.

In my statement today, I must take note of the remarkable progress achieved during 2013. It was a year of significant changes, as well as political progress, in particular through the historic achievement, in April 2013, of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

The essential basis for that progress has been an increased level of mutual confidence and direct communication between the parties, which have been sustained regardless of disagreements and disputes over the details of implementation. I once again wish to recognize the two Prime Ministers for their ongoing efforts at reconciliation and confidence-building, commendably facilitated by European Union (EU) High Representative Catherine Ashton.

Since my last briefing to the Council (see S/PV.7064), several additional concrete steps have been completed successfully. By the end of this reporting period, some 80 former Serbian police officers had completed their induction and transition to the Kosovo police. In just the few weeks since then, the number has grown to a total of 142 officers, who have already been deployed for active duty in the northern regional command. It is expected that some 100 additional officers will complete their induction and assume duties in the north by the end of this week.

The implementation of the terms agreed regarding the judiciary in northern Kosovo has not been completed yet, although some progress was made during the most recent high-level discussions in Brussels, on 27 January. Both parties should be urged to move expeditiously to bring the discussion to a conclusion, hopefully during their twenty-second round of high-level talks, scheduled for the day after tomorrow in Brussels. Flexibility should be demonstrated by both sides on such future arrangements as would ensure maximum access to justice and promote broad public confidence in the system.

Building greater confidence in the police and judiciary throughout Kosovo is of the highest importance, especially as implementation proceeds in northern Kosovo. Two recent as yet unresolved cases only underscore that importance. On 16 January, one of the newly elected members of the North Mitrovica Municipal Assembly, Dimitrije Janićijević, was killed near his home. Although the motives remain unknown, the murder followed repeated violent attacks on the same individual and his property in recent years. The deplorable killing, last September, of a Lithuanian European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) official, Audrius Šenavičius, in a cowardly attack on a EULEX convoy remains unresolved. Regardless of the circumstances and background of those and other major crimes, as long as they remain unsolved, they will continue to negatively affect perceptions of insecurity and impunity for the perpetrators and those who support and protect them. Active cooperation by all in resolving those cases is essential for normalizing the situation in northern Kosovo.

Meanwhile, the implementation of other agreements has moved forward in several areas. In November, regular information exchange started between the respective revenue authorities via the European Commission's System for Exchange of Excise Data, fulfilling a joint commitment made by the parties. On 14 December, the collection of duties commenced at the two main northern crossing points. That followed further agreement on the management of funds collected there through a special account.

More recently, on 24 January, Belgrade, through the European Union, handed over a first batch of digitized cadastral records to Pristina. That marked the start of a comprehensive comparison and reconciliation of Kosovo property records — the first since the end of the conflict.

Despite the overall successful conduct of Kosovo local elections, we have witnessed a slow pace in the establishment of new administrations in northern Kosovo municipalities. Indeed, the inaugurations of newly elected municipal councils were finally held on 11 January, the last day of the official deadline, after a series of postponements. At this very moment, during the last hours of the deadline, municipal assemblies of the four northern municipalities are in session to discuss and adopt the statute of their respective municipalities. In the North Mitrovica municipality, the decision of the mayor-elect not to take the oath of office has necessitated a new mayoral election, which is now scheduled for 23 February. In addition, the arrest, on 27 January, of a prominent local Kosovo Serb political leader and a candidate for the position of mayor in northern Mitrovica, Oliver Ivanović, on charges of war crimes and aggravated murder, triggered local tensions, leading to protests and public calls for his release pending trial. That situation is indicative of the challenges and delicacy of the implementation of 19 April Agreement.

While an important milestone will be reached with the full constitution of the municipal administrations, the establishment of a community/association of Serb-majority municipalities will represent another major step in the full implementation of the 19 April Agreement. In order to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability, the new municipal administrations should be supported, both in terms of resources and political engagement, by all local and international stakeholders, through a well-coordinated assistance mechanism.

The deep prevailing concerns among the local public in the north over the implications of the ongoing political transitions on their daily lives should be met by determined efforts to achieve visible progress in improving local infrastructure and delivery of public services and in ensuring reliable and responsive law enforcement. High demands and expectations from the population are directed to the newly elected mayors and members of the municipal councils. They will need early and firm support in order to fulfil reasonable expectations.

Looking ahead, international engagement will be critical in enabling Kosovo Serbs to exercise their franchise in the early Serbian parliamentary elections scheduled for 16 March. Extensive discussions have also taken place among local Kosovo political actors on possible elections for the Kosovo Assembly and on the issue of electoral reform, with a view to ensuring greater transparency, simplicity and inclusiveness, including the updating of the electoral lists. Some exchanges have also taken place on possible constitutional amendments, in particular those related to the so-called reserved seats for representatives of the minority communities. Those discussions have not concluded at the present time, but their results will be crucial in paving the way for a broader participation of Kosovo Serbs and other minorities in Kosovo's legislative elections.

Speaking in the broader context of international peace and security, as the issue was raised within the Chamber, I wish to mention that a debate also took place within Kosovo on the participation of local residents in conflicts in other regions, such as Syria. Last week, the Kosovo authorities proposed to the Kosovo Assembly a draft law that would prohibit and criminalize the participation of Kosovars in armed conflicts abroad.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/68), some progress is being made in the clarification of the fates of missing persons from the conflict, with the discovery of human remains at a suspected mass grave site in southern Serbia. Excavations, which were suspended for the winter, are due to resume in the spring. However, far too many families on both sides still have no word on the fate of their missing loved ones. It is imperative that individuals and institutions with any knowledge of the fate of the missing persons come forward and help to achieve closure of that painful chapter. Progress on that important matter, as well as finding an appropriate mechanism for compensating the aggrieved families, will certainly go a long way towards facilitating greater reconciliation and integration among Kosovo communities, as well as furthering the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

Major developments have taken place during the past year, several of them breakthroughs on issues outstanding since the end of the conflict. The European perspective, as well as the effective facilitation led by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, have emerged as key instruments for political progress and for encouraging the gradual reform and modernization of Kosovo's public institutions.

In December, the Council of the European Union noted the opening of negotiations for a stabilization and association agreement with Kosovo and took note of the intention of the European Commission to conclude the negotiations in the course of 2014. The Council also adopted the general EU position for the opening of accession negotiations with Serbia, and the first intergovernmental conference with Serbia was launched on 21 January. Within the broader context of progress by both parties in their respective relations with European institutions, major European assistance to local projects and programmes in Kosovo will also clearly remain central.

Moreover, bilateral donor assistance projects should be carefully coordinated with all other efforts on the ground. In that regard, United Nations agencies, programmes and funds are a ready and able partner to add value to that effort. On its part, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) welcomes those processes and will continue to be fully engaged in a coordinated effort, applying its resources and relations with all communities to build up confidence on the ground. It will be essential for Belgrade and Pristina to consolidate the historic progress achieved thus far and to overcome, gradually but steadily, the many outstanding issues through dialogue. It is also my hope that members of the Council will, individually and collectively, welcome the pragmatic steps being taken by the parties towards the normalization of their relations. Acknowledging the substantial progress achieved and encouraging further steps will greatly strengthen the resolve of both sides in overcoming the remaining challenges to building a stable and peaceful future.

Allow me to conclude by thanking you, Madam President, and all members of the Council for your valuable engagement with the parties and for your continuing support to the work of UNMIK.

The President: I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, let me welcome the new members of the Security Council and wish them success in their work.

It is a source of great honour and satisfaction for me to be given yet another opportunity to address a meeting of the Security Council dedicated to the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), a rare opportunity indeed to consider, in this forum, the way to go to overcome the problems in Kosovo and Metohija.

Let me express, once again, my gratitude for the contribution made by the United Nations for almost 15 years now to the solution of outstanding issues. During that time, a significant contribution has undoubtedly been made by these quarterly meetings convened under resolution 1244 (1999), the only valid legal framework of the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija.

At the next Security Council meeting, we shall mark the first anniversary of the signing of the Brussels

Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, reached between Belgrade and Pristina in April 2013. In order to achieve ever-better results in the implementation of the Brussels Agreement in the period to come and to be able to look back at the results in that period with satisfaction, we must establish much clearer rules and build much greater confidence.

We appreciate very much the constructive approach taken by the United Nations and its Special Representative Mr. Farid Zarif, as well as by the organizations working under the United Nations umbrella, including the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). They have created conditions for all sides to work together on improving the living conditions of all people in Kosovo and Metohija, irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. I believe that the Council will agree that disagreements with regard to the question of the status of Kosovo and Metohija must not impede our efforts to act jointly to bring about solutions to practical questions that were pushed onto the backburner by Pristina for many years.

Thanks to the unstinting efforts of all actors in the negotiations, major breakthroughs have been made, which are noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/68). Let me take this opportunity once again to thank Baroness Ashton for her patient and wise mediation, on behalf of the European Union, of the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina.

The patience and wisdom that helped us overcome the decades-long vacuum are of key importance for the process of the normalization of relations, which is a precondition for the normalization of life in Kosovo and Metohija. Should our patience and wisdom now wear thin, not only would we not progress towards results, but we would squander peoples' trust and have to wait a long time for another opportunity to rehabilitate the idea of cohabitation.

I call on the members of the Security Council to join efforts to create additional conditions on the ground for the consistent implementation of the agreements we have reached so far, for I deeply believe that this is the only way to establish mutual trust in Kosovo and Metohija. Short of such trust, we may not, I am afraid, have sound foundations for any future agreements.

I am sure that, in solidifying the foundations, the European Union will continue to lend us a helping hand, primarily during the upcoming negotiations in Brussels, as well as within the negotiations on European integration that we have begun. On 21 January, the Republic of Serbia officially started the process of accession to the Union, of which we are very proud, since we consider the decision of the European Union to open the negotiations as recognition of the efforts that we have invested in modernizing the country. We consider that the beginning of the accession process is also a great impetus to further work to improve the living conditions of the Serbian people in Kosovo, on the renewed conviction that our constructive approach to the promotion of European values in Serbian society will be properly appreciated. The fact that the accession negotiations began on 21 January and that the screening on chapter 35 of the conditions for membership was held is telling evidence that the Republic of Serbia had fulfilled its obligations under the Brussels Agreement in time and approached the dialogue in a constructive spirit.

In addition to the need to implement all basic human rights provisions, including amending the legal framework with respect to religious freedoms, the Kosovo 2013 Progress Report of the European Commission points also to the need for addressing other very important problems confronting Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija. The report calls for the improved implementation of the existing legal framework and for the enforcement of decisions to remedy human rights infringements. It also highlights the need for simplifying and streamlining the complex and overlapping institutional set-up for reporting on those rights, as well as for their promotion, at both central and local levels. It points to the continued attacks on religious heritage sites, in particular the widespread desecration of Serbian Orthodox churches and cemeteries, and the need for improving the mechanisms for reporting and following up on such activities.

The report also points to the weak implementation of anti-discrimination policies and goes on to say that many unresolved property compensation claims are still before the courts and that inter-ethnic disputes are unduly prolonged. The so-called Kosovo authorities, it is also said in the report, need to do more to reach out to displaced persons regarding the expropriation of their real estate. The sustainability of the returns and reintegration processes continues to be further restrained by ongoing incidents affecting returnees, their property and religious and cultural heritage sites, as well as by limited access to property and public

services, blocked or delayed property restitution and a lack of economic opportunities.

We have called upon Serbs to participate in the local elections in Kosovo. In order to encourage them to also participate in the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Kosovo and Metohija as a desirable step — which is, I believe, in our common interests — we must focus on eliminating the shortcomings that marred the recent local elections. The report fails to address any of the numerous obstacles that Serbs encountered in that processes and that prevented many of them from participating in the elections and exercising freely their civil rights.

We shall continue to insist on the implementation of the agreements reached in Brussels in both letter and spirit, which was not the case at the local elections. Notwithstanding the agreements, the election materials were only partially status-neutral; mail registration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) began after almost a two-month delay and lasted only five days; despite the agreement that Serbian documents were also valid, verification of the inclusion of a person in voters' lists with Kosovo's Central Election Commission was possible only on the basis of the Kosovo personal number; and the possibility of e-mail registration was unavailable to that category of voters.

Let me point out that the IDP identity card was considered as proof of displacement and identity at elections so far, while at the local elections in Kosovo and Metohija the IDP identity card or the certificate issued by the Refugee and Migrations Commissariat of the Republic of Serbia were being considered only as proof of identity. Considering that there is no other way to prove internal displacement, the Central Election Commission refused to recognize in this way the IDP registration carried out and verified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the voters' list established by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The situation regarding voters' lists is very complex and it is imperative that they be updated in time for the next elections. The IDPs who were not entered into the voters' list of the Central Election Commission of Kosovo are many even though they fulfilled all conditions. It so happens that even the election candidates had no right to vote, although the Commission itself confirmed the validity of their candidatures — a practice that is unprecedented in the world.

I considered it necessary to highlight the problems that Serbs encountered in pre-election and election processes lest an impression be created that, except in northern Kosovo and Metohija, things run smoothly everywhere else. There is a need to remedy those shortcomings before the next elections. We must not disregard the fact that, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General, there were incidents at polling stations in the north that did not occur in the second round due to the intervention of political leaders and, let me add, proper organization of the elections by the authorities. I regret that those obviously effective measures were not taken before the first round of elections.

The recent assassination of Dimitrije Janićijević, a mayoral candidate in northern Kosovska Mitrovica, helped create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, which will surely dent the prospects of Serbs' participation in elections. We are witness to exactly what I have persistently warned about in this Chamber — a failure to punish perpetrators of crimes against Serbs is instrumental to creating a climate amenable to the perpetration of new crimes, which must not go unpunished and whose perpetrators we expect to see brought to justice soon.

Nor has stability been helped by the arrest of Oliver Ivanović, another mayoral candidate in northern Kosovska Mitrovica and one of the most prominent Serbian politicians in Kosovo and Metohija. That is indicative of another problem we have warned about for years and which we expect to be resolved. While secret indictments may not exist in Kosovo and Metohija, witnesses who must testify 15 years after crimes were allegedly committed do. Ivanović, who is being detained in a prison in Pristina, was arrested specifically on the basis of such testimony. In addition, the appellate court failed to provide an explanation as to why the legal deadline to act upon his arrest appeal was allowed to lapse.

The Republic of Serbia most vigorously protests the arrest of Oliver Ivanović and requests the Security Council to seek his release from detention and an explanation as to why he was arrested just prior to the holding of the mayoral elections in northern Kosovska Mitrovica, of which he is one of the candidates. Such unwarranted actions may threaten the already fragile peace and stability in Kosovo and Metohija. The Government of the Republic of Serbia has given guarantees that Oliver Ivanović, Dragoljub Delibašić,

Laza Lazić and Žarko Veselinović, who are being detained in Kosovo and Metohija, will be available to EULEX during the court proceedings in their entirety.

Elections in northern Mitrovica will be held and its mayor elected. Steps will be taken thereafter to establish the community of Serbian municipalities, the statute of which is currently being drafted. However, we must mention the failure of Pristina to prepare a legal framework for the effective exercise of the competencies of the future community pursuant to the Brussels Agreement and its lack of political will to implement that part of the Agreement. It is necessary to achieve fundamental agreement on the long-term representation of the Serbian community in Pristina's central institutions, with a clear picture of its participation in Government agencies, and to regulate, inter alia, financing methods, communication with Pristina and modalities for holding central Government elections.

Even if it is accurate for the reporting period, the Secretary-General's assessment that the number of inter-ethnic incidents has decreased does not exonerate the perpetrators of the more than 7,000 physical attacks that have been carried out since 1999. Regrettably, despite our numerous protestations, no records on ethnically motivated crimes have yet been compiled, and the competent agencies of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo and Metohija continue to fall short in trying those crimes.

Although the number of attacks is smaller compared to previous reporting periods, the fact remains that the attacks have never come to an end, just as it is a fact that Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija are becoming increasingly scarce. Therefore, the number of attacks must never be reduced to a statistic that could be misleading; what is clear, however, is the message transmitted by attacks on members of a community. An ethnic crime of low intensity may suffice to cause serious limitations to the freedom of movement of Serbs and other non-Albanians who find their lives compromised by a complex range of minor limitations, such as a reluctance to travel alone or by night, restriction of choices of place and time for small purchases of everyday necessities, limited use of the Serbian language in public places, the safety of trips to school, and so on. Public condemnation of ethnically motivated incidents would go a long way towards improving inter-ethnic dialogue and tolerance and help create the awareness that the future lies in multi-ethnicity and the acceptance of returnees from other ethnic groups.

The current discriminatory treatment of minority communities makes it impossible for their members to lead normal lives, especially with respect to the enjoyment of all rights legally provided for in instruments in force in Kosovo and Metohija. The law on discrimination promulgated by the Special Representative himself provides special protection to minority communities, bans all forms of discrimination and protects the individual not only against discriminatory acts of public agencies, but also against the discriminatory behaviour of legal and natural persons. Regrettably, UNMIK and the Pristina institutions have not followed up on the high quality of that legal text with concrete and relevant measures to implement it, leaving a huge discrepancy and outright contrast between them and everyday instances of direct discrimination.

The question of the restitution of property to members of non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija, among which Serbs are the majority, is surely embedded in the question of minority rights. In addition, there is the open question of the property of the State of Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church. The legal mechanisms initiated by UNMIK and EULEX to address property issues, assist courts to reduce the number of unresolved claims and provide protection to individuals in cases of human rights violations have, regrettably, yielded less than adequate results. That type of litigation accounts for 40 per cent of the overall number of unresolved cases before the courts of Kosovo and Metohija. Furthermore, the large number of forged ownership documents creates another impediment to upholding of property rights. About 40,000 land restitution claims have been filed at the Kosovo Property Agency, while, according to unofficial data, almost 700,000 parcels have been usurped. Another problem affecting property restitution is the lack of appropriate protection against repeated unlawful repossession after eviction. Moreover, Serbian property in Kosovo and Metohija has been expropriated following the decision of the so-called Kosovo authorities for the purposes of highway construction. In the Gračanica municipality, for example, about 170 out of 213 expropriated properties belong to Serbs.

We were recently advised that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government intended to alter the legal status of the Trepča combine, the majority owner

of which is the Republic of Serbia. The combine employs a large number of members of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija. The adoption of a new law designed to amend the ownership structure and the legal status of the combine would undoubtedly be yet another unilateral act that could result in altering the rights and the status of Trepča employees and members of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija. That would be tantamount to confiscating the property of the Republic of Serbia and a violation of the basic principles of property rights.

The alteration of the legal regulation would result in the rescission of creditors' rights. It is far from clear today how the question of their claims would be resolved, considering that only creditors who had registered claims against the Trepča combine through the management team for the establishment of the community of Serbian municipalities could request payment of more than €268 million.

In that context, laws are being changed in the areas that will remain matters of debate. By so acting, Pristina has shown itself to be inconsistent and unwilling to honour agreements. Furthermore, laws are being changed in other areas as well, before being negotiated in Brussels. Moreover, in areas where agreement has already been reached, Pristina has failed to show the political will needed to start the political process that, as the first step in the implementation of the Agreement, would change the legal framework to allow the formation of the community of Serbian municipalities, in accordance with its commitments.

The Serbs and members of other minority communities in Kosovo and Metohija continue to encounter problems. Their freedom of movement is still limited or blocked. Their security and free use of language, access to institutions, exercise of the right to participate in elections and vote are threatened. No mechanisms exist either to provide for restitution of usurped property or to protect property from repossession after eviction. Entry into possession is being prevented, and there is no free choice of the place of return and no conditions for the sustainable survival of returnees. Even if returnees decide to return, local communities do their utmost to make them feel neither accepted nor acceptable. In the municipality of Klina, two returnee houses have already been set on fire in the past 10 days. Last but not least, attempts are continually being made to rename or to stamp out Serbian cultural and religious heritage and to confiscate property belonging to the Republic of Serbia.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, one of the priorities of the United Nations Mission is to ensure respect for human rights. We believe that all international missions must respect such a priority, irrespective of which right is involved. They should be even more mindful with regard to the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the minority communities in Kosovo and Metohija. We see UNMIK as the main guarantor, all the more so as the EU Mission will be reconfigured during the year.

I would like to point out in particular that any discussion of a possible change of the scope and mandate of EULEX must not take place outside the Security Council, bearing in mind that the United Nations is the coordinating organization of the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija. I believe that today's meeting is the right opportunity to initiate a discussion on the reconfiguration of EULEX, as the Security Council is the only appropriate forum to agree on changes in Kosovo and Metohija that would lead to lasting and stable progress in the field. Given that it was necessary for the Security Council to adopt a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/44) on the so-called six-point plan of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, that is, to deploy EULEX under the UNMIK umbrella, is not the approval of that body also needed for a substantial change in the mandate and scope of the EU Mission? The point of departure for determining the measures to be taken to improve the contribution of the European Union to Kosovo and Metohija should be a report of the Secretary-General on the progress that EULEX has achieved to date. The Republic of Serbia expects a discussion on that topic to be started and will participate constructively in it.

In brief, owing to the lack of mutual trust, I believe that, in order for all agreements to be implemented, an international presence in Kosovo and Metohija is necessary. That is equally true for UNMIK, the Kosovo Force, EULEX and the missions of other international organizations. Each and every proposal for the termination of those missions, the reduction of their scope and a change in their mandate must be the subject matter of a serious discussion and agreement, lest it affect the peace and stability in Kosovo and Metohija and, by extension, in the entire region.

Serbian officials continue meticulously to follow the investigation launched by the EULEX Special

Investigative Task Force into the allegations made in the December 2010 report of Swiss senator Dick Marty, which was almost unanimously adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. According to the report, entitled "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo", hundreds of Serbs were abducted in Kosovo before, during and immediately after the 1999 conflict and sent to secret detention camps in the Republic of Albania. Many of them were subsequently selected for forced surgery before being murdered. Their internal body organs were extracted and sold on the international black market.

Just as Serbia has done everything to uncover and prosecute all those who committed atrocities against the Albanian population in Kosovo, it expects the whole truth on the war crimes committed against Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija to be established and all those responsible for such crimes to be punished. The families of the Serbian victims must not be seen as less deserving of justice than the victims of the other war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

Participating in the Security Council meeting on 21 August 2012 (see S/PV.6822) for the first time in my capacity as Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, I said that the solution of the problems in Kosovo and Metohija would be one of the most important priorities of the new Government and that we were ready to achieve, through negotiations and dialogue, a peaceful and sustainable solution that fully respected the legitimate interests of both Albanians and Serbs, as well as all other peoples living in Kosovo and Metohija.

We want lasting peace. In order for peace to last, it must be just. I say that as someone born in Prizren, Kosovo and Metohija, the town that was the capital of Serbia in the Middle Ages. Only 20-odd Serbs live there today. As a consequence of the five-century-long occupation by the Ottoman Empire and the ethnic cleansing of Serbs by Albanians in the past two centuries, Albanians are the majority population of Kosovo and Metohija today. That fact does not give the right to the Albanians to take unilateral decisions of independence without the agreement of the country from which they secede.

Let me be quite clear: Serbia is ready for normalization and reconciliation in the region, primarily in the interests of ordinary people. Serbia is also ready for dialogue aimed at finding a comprehensive solution, but it is not prepared to accept, and never will be, the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo and Metohija. We warn Pristina not to misinterpret the readiness of Serbia for dialogue and compromise as Serbia's weakness and not to use such readiness for the affirmation of its self-declared independence.

In order to bring about a historical reconciliation of the two peoples and a comprehensive solution to the problem of Kosovo and Metohija, it is necessary that the two sides take difficult and courageous decisions. We played our part and shall continue the dialogue with undiminished intensity and maximum constructiveness. Pristina, however, must be aware that there is no lasting comprehensive solution without Serbia's agreement and the decision of this body that I am addressing, the Security Council. Fifteen years have elapsed since the end of the armed conflict in Kosovo and Metohija. Instead of continuing to live in the past and condemning each other, it is time that we found a sustainable solution for the future.

I call on all States members of the Security Council to use the momentum reached in the solution of the problems in Kosovo and Metohija, which, I am sure, none of them expected when I spoke of it here 18 months ago, as an opportunity to build lasting stability and long-lasting peace in Kosovo and Metohija and the entire region.

I thank the Council for its attention and understanding of the challenges facing us.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

Mr. Thaçi (*spoke in Albanian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is my special pleasure to address the Council today in the first meeting of 2014 on the Kosovo issue and to present the positive progress made in Kosovo during the past three months. In particular, that includes the second round of the first local elections throughout the entire territory of the Republic of Kosovo, the establishment of local municipalities in northern Kosovo and the European Union (EU) integration process, as well as the recent results in the bilateral process to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

Let me start by warmly commending the continuing efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for peace and progress in Kosovo and the Balkans. I would also like to congratulate the new members to the Security

Council, namely, Chad, Chile, Jordan, Lithuania and Nigeria.

The holding of free elections throughout the entire territory of Kosovo on the basis of Kosovo's legislation — which were organized in a fair and transparent manner, thereby upholding the highest international standards — is the best sign that Kosovo could sent to the democratic world and the friends and supporters of democracy in Kosovo. The Kosovo police, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Kosovo Force, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union Election Observation Mission and local actors were in charge of that undertaking. Their efforts brought about notable results for Kosovar democracy.

The mayors were sworn in at the inaugural meeting of the municipal assemblies in northern Kosovo in accordance with the laws and the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. The electoral results and the will of the people were respected. That demonstrated that the important stage of functioning municipal bodies had been successfully completed and that it was accomplished in accordance with the laws and the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, as well as the Brussels Agreement of 19 April 2013.

Unfortunately, the elected mayor of the municipality of North Mitrovica failed to take the oath of office in accordance with the laws of Kosovo. Consequently, he has lost the mandate and, in accordance with the law on local elections, the President of the Republic of Kosovo has called a new mayoral election in North Mitrovica, which is expected to be held on 23 February of this year.

All preparations have been made for this process, and we expect that the citizens of northern Mitrovica will come out to vote and elect a local leader who will be ready to accept and respect the laws of Kosovo.

On 16 January, an unfortunate and tragic death cast a shadow over the post-election process. The murder of Assemblyman Dimitrije Janicijevic, the Serbian Independent Liberal Party candidate for mayor of northern Mitrovica, shocked the people of Kosovo. Without prejudging the outcome of the investigation, let me say that it is my belief that this may have been a premeditated murder by those circles that are attempting to further hold hostage Kosovo Serb citizens who want to become part of and contribute to the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo — an attack on those who recognize reality and who strive to work for a better life.

The Kosovo Government and all relevant institutions have condemned that criminal act — the murder of the Assemblyman — and we have reached out to console the family in these difficult days. We deem this act of violence intolerable, and it is for this reason that we have asked the relevant authorities to investigate the case and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Positive trends of economic and financial stability have continued in the Republic of Kosovo, as reflected in the 2014 budget. The budget accurately reflects our sustainable resources and the goal of increasing social welfare. The budget of the Republic of Kosovo for 2014 is in line with the directives of the International Monetary Fund and predicts economic growth of over 4 per cent, which is one of the highest in the region. At the same time, through membership in the global financial mechanisms, it has become possible to obtain development loans that are gradually opening the way for the private sector to take the lead in economic growth.

A series of agreements for the elimination of double taxation, the protection and promotion of investments, economic cooperation and customs have been or are expected to be signed this year with various countries. These achievements have been noted in the respective World Bank reports.

Political stability and the prospect of European integration have benefited the economy. In mentioning Kosovo's European agenda, let me thank here the European Parliament, which on 16 January adopted a resolution introduced by the European Parliament's rapporteur for Kosovo, Mrs. Ulrike Lunacek. The resolution was adopted overwhelmingly by members of the European Parliament of all political groupings.

The resolution welcomes the achievements and results that Kosovo has registered in its six-year journey as an independent and sovereign country. It recognized the progress made in building a State for all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity or faith, on the path towards European integration.

Kosovo was also congratulated for having achieved a number of important political reforms by administrative and economic authorities, as well as for the harmonization of its local legislation with the European Union. That is one of the criteria required

for meeting the conditions for visa liberalization and building the capacity to address the priorities of the European integration process arising from the feasibility study of the European Commission.

As a result of those achievements, the European Parliament's resolution gives Kosovo great political support and calls on five European Union — Spain, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus — to recognize the Republic of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign country. The resolution also expresses support for the further advancement of the visa liberalization process and negotiations on the stabilization and association agreement process, urging the European Union to open the door for the full integration of Kosovo. The integration of the Republic of Kosovo into the European Union is our primary goal; it is the only way of modernizing and consolidating the region into the European family.

We are currently conducting negotiations with the European Commission to determine the content of the stabilization and association agreement and ensure the free movement of our citizens in the European Union Schengen zone as two complementary contractual processes for Kosovo. The successful development of negotiations with the European Union and the achievement of the stabilization and association agreement, expected to be concluded by spring, remain high on our governance agenda.

A few days after this meeting of the Security Council, the Republic of Kosovo will celebrate the sixth anniversary of its declaration of independence, already recognized by 105 countries from all over the world. I would like to thank all of the countries that have recognized Kosovo, and I call on other countries, including members of the Council that have not yet recognized Kosovo, to take this step and join the democratic world in support of Kosovo as an equal and full member of the international community. Such formal recognition of Kosovo would make a direct contribution to the strengthening of peace and stability in the region and beyond.

On this path of integration, the Kosovo Government wishes to thank the secretariat of the Regional School of Public Administration, based in Montenegro, and the member States of the organization in the region for Kosovo's membership. We recognize that Kosovo's membership in various regional and international organizations will help in further strengthening regional cooperation as an important precondition for EU membership.

Finally, the isolation for more than two decades of Kosovo athletes has partially ended, since the International Federation of Football Association, after meeting with leaders of the football federations of Kosovo and Serbia, has reached a consensus that enables the Republic of Kosovo to play international matches. We consider this as an important first step towards full membership in the sports mechanisms of European and world football.

We have seen even better developments with respect to the Executive Committee of the European Handball Federation, which now allows Kosovo to play international matches without any conditions.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I wish to thank Special Representative Zarif for his briefing. I would like to welcome Prime Minister Dačić and Prime Minister Thaçi back to the Council and to thank them for their comments. I commend the Prime Ministers for their continued dedication to the dialogue process over these past few months.

The United States congratulates Kosovo on the successful second-round elections held on 1 December as well as the repeat votes in Parteš/Partesh, Zveçan/Zvečan and northern Mitrovica municipalities. Their organization and relatively high voter turnout reflect Kosovo's commitment to free and fair democratic elections and desire among the people to make their voices heard. We commend the coordination between the Kosovo police, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo to ensure that citizens throughout Kosovo could vote in a secure environment.

The memorandum of understanding between police and prosecutors to address reports of intimidation and fraud on election day also contributed to the success of the elections. We congratulate all of the mayors and municipal assembly members officially inaugurated in December and January, including Kosovo's first female mayor, and commend their readiness to serve their communities in accordance with Kosovo law and Kosovo's institutional framework. We call upon local leaders throughout Kosovo to support dialogue, cooperation and integration within their communities.

The United States fully supports the European Union-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the landmark April 2013 Agreement to normalize relations. The Prime Ministers and EU High Representative Ashton deserve our praise and continued support for their efforts and leadership.

Sustaining the dialogue's successes remains crucial for long-term stability, reconciliation and development in the region and is in the interests of all citizens. Normalization between Serbia and Kosovo will bring opportunities for communities in both countries, including jobs and economic growth. The ongoing integration of the police, the resumption of customs controls at the northern gates and the establishment of the development fund for the north are just a few aspects of the hope, order and normalcy achieveable through the dialogue.

We welcome the acknowledgement by both Prime Ministers that there remains much more to be done to implement all that has been agreed. With that in mind, we believe we should reduce the number of reports to, and meetings of, the Council and allow Kosovo and Serbia time to concentrate on the full implementation of the dialogue, to include integrating the judiciary in the north and staff from the civil protection corps into the Kosovo framework and removing remaining impediments to the free and lawful movement of goods and people.

The United States appreciates the Government of Kosovo's outreach to Kosovo's Serbs, especially efforts to work with newly elected munical authorities to ease integration, ensure functional decentralized institutions and promote inclusiveness in the spirit of the April Agreement. We encourage Kosovo authorities to continue expanding those outreach efforts, particularly in northern Kosovo, so that ordinary citizens hear and see positive examples of the Government of Kosovo's commitment to all of its citizens, regardless of ethnicity.

Prime Minister Thaçi's Christmas visit to Serbian returnee families in Klina and Vidanje illustrates a dedication to welcoming displaced families back to Kosovo. The Government needs to sustain that whole-of-society effort. Attacks, burgluries and harassment of Kosovo Serb returnees must be addressed in the strongest terms and the perpetrators must face justice. Preserving and protecting religious and cultural heritage sites is part of the effort, and we welcome the progress that has led to the adjustment of KFOR's presence at the Peć Patriarchate, the eighth of nine internationally protected sites to be transferred to Kosovo police protection. We continue to encourage the full implementation of the Law on Cultural Heritage and the establishment and enforcement of the special protected zone through the Law on the Village of Velika Hoča.

Finally, we congratulate both Kosovo and Serbia on the achievement of their recent milestones on the path towards membership in the European Union, with Kosovo beginning negotiations on a stabilization and association agreement and Serbia beginning accession talks with the European Union.

I must again underscore the appreciation of the United States for the growing number of countries that have recognized Kosovo as an independent and sovereign State. Those recognitions are a reflection of the progress Kosovo has made on internal reforms, as well as the new dynamic in Serbia and Kosovo relations. It is that progress that bolsters stability in the Western Balkans. We encourage the countries that have not recognized Kosovo to reinforce those efforts by joining the more than 100 United Nations Members in acknowledging the reality of an independent Kosovo.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Serbian Prime Minister, Mr. Ivica Dačić. We share his views. We took note of the statement by Mr. Thaçi.

We are grateful to Mr. Zarif for introducing the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2014/68) and for his assessment of the situation in the province.

Russia's position on Kosovo remains consistent. We support Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We believe that resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in effect and is still the universally binding, international legal basis for a settlement of the Kosovo issue. The United Nations Mission is the main international presence in the province. No one is entitled to hinder the implementation of its mandate. We condemn the attempts to undermine the role of UMIK, including those that took place during the November and December 2013 municipal elections. We call on UNMIK to fully and proactively carry out its mandate, and to focus, inter alia, on tackling challenges in such important areas as the rule of law, the protection of the rights of ethnic and

religious minorities, forging intercommunity dialogue and the protection of orthodox shrines and cultural buildings.

We note the intensification of dialogue at the highest political level between Belgrade and Pristina. Priority has been given to issues linked to the establishment of a community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo and to clarifying their authorities. The creation of an effective structure duly representing the interest of Kosovo Serbs is important in terms of ensuring security for the Serb community and maintaining stability in Kosovo as a whole. In that regard, the Kosovo Albanian authorities and the international presence should strengthen efforts to develop interethnic dialogue and build an atmosphere of trust. Without that, any talk of the multiethnic nature of Kosovo society seems unrealistic.

The plight of the Serb minority in Kosovo remains disturbing. There has been no progress in efforts to return internally displaced persons. In that regard, we note the conclusions of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Mr. Chaloka Beyani, with regard to the continued discrimination against minorities on ethnic grounds: high unemployment, restrictions in education and problems recovering property stolen by the Kosovo Albanians. Such a situation has also been confirmed by the representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and by the Kosovo Ombudsperson.

People are afraid to go to Kosovo because of ethnically motivated threats of violence and the absence of security guarantees and protection of their rights by the local authorities. Sadly, there has been a trend of attacks by Kosovars on Serb worshippers travelling to Kosovo for Christmas. Such a situation reflectes the inabilitiy of the international structures, above all the Kosovo security forces and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), to effectively counter provocative actions by the Kosovo Albanians.

We are seriously concerned by the signs coming from Pristina with regard to the drawdown of EULEX activities as early as June. The Mission was deployed with the consent of the Security Council. With that approval, it received several mandates from UNMIK that the European Union Mission was unable to cope with unilaterally. As resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in effect, those powers are assigned to UNMIK under international law and cannot be transferred to a third party, particularly not to Pristina's self-declared institutions.

We await the end of the EULEX investigation into allegations of illegal organ harvesting, identified by the Council of Europe Special Rapporteur Dick Marty, and the beginning of trials. All those found guilty of serious crimes must be brought to justice. Proceedings must be carried out objectively and impartially, and should not be guided by dubious criteria of political expediency.

We are also seriously toubled by reports of the participation of Kosovo Albanians in the Syrian armed conflict in the ranks of Al-Qaida affiliated terrorist groups, such as Jabhat Al-Nusra and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Sadly, such facts have not been condemned by religious and political leaders in the province. We call on them to consider the serious consequences that could arise once the militants return to the territory of Kosovo. To Member States, it is clear that further radicalization, both in the Western Balkans and in the European Union, is inevitable in that regard.

Mr. Tatham (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing today. I am also delighted to welcome to the Council His Excellency Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo and His Excellency Prime Minister Ivica Dačić of Serbia.

The United Kingdom is grateful for the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (S/2014/68). As the report notes, 2013 was indeed a year of significant political progress in Kosovo. The United Kingdom notes in particular the largely successful local elections held at the end of the year. We once again welcome the efforts of both Serbia and Kosovo to encourage a large turnout to those polls. The European Union Election Observation Mission, supported by 34 local observer teams from diplomatic representations in Pristina, assessed the election process to have been, by and large, free and fair and orderly. That demonstrates that political will and determination can translate into a cleaner and fair process.

The United Kingdom welcomes the particiption for the first time of citizens from the four northern municipalities. We congratulate the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for successfully fulfilling its facilitatin role in the north and commend the robust security arrangements that were put in place by the Kosovo police, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and NATO following

unrest in northern Mitrovica during the first round of the elections.

We continue to support the important work of EULEX, including its assistance on the implementation of dialogue agreements, the integration of institutions in the north under Kosovo's jurisdiction and on strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo. We encourage further cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia on the issue of missing persons, including through both national commissions. That is an extremely sensitive process for the families involved and is crucial for reconciliation in the region. EULEX has made a valuable contribution to that work, and we stress the importance of retaining its Department of Forensic Medicine as part of the current strategic review.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/68) also makes clear that progress in 2013 must now be consolidated and serve as a basis for further achievements in the coming months. Both Belgrade and Pristina must continue with the implementation of the 19 April Agreement in the European Union-facilitated dialogue. Steps have been taken, such as the beginning of the integration of former Ministry of Internal Affairs special police officers into the Kosovo police. It is crucial that the progress continue, including after the upcoming municipal electoral processes. The association of Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo should be established as quickly as possible after the municipal election rerun on 23 February, in accordance with the 19 April Agreement.

The normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is integral to both countries' European Union (EU) accession paths, and the full implementation of the dialogue agreement is necessary to unlock progress. We are right to recognize that both Prime Ministers have demonstrated courage and political leadership in their commitment to the process, but it is important now that both sides implement the day-to-day details of the dialogue agreements so that the process develops a momentum of its own. More ownership is needed at the working level to turn those compromises into realities on the ground and to explain the process to the people whom it will affect, particularly the inhabitants of northern Kosovo.

The United Kingdom welcomed the opening of stabilization and association agreement negotiations between Kosovo and the EU in October 2013. Following the December 2013 European Council's unanimous agreement to open accession negotiations with Serbia and to the condition that, before joining the EU, Serbia must normalize its relations with Kosovo, we look forward to Kosovo being formally bound into a corresponding programme of reform and dialogue by completing a stabilization and association agreement as soon as possible.

The United Kingdom welcomes the continuing international trend towards further recognitions of Kosovo, and it encourages those countries that have not yet done so to recognize Kosovo and, accordingly, to contribute to regional stability.

Finally, it is heartening that once again we are reviewing a report of the Secretary-General that underlines significant progress in Kosovo, and, of course, long may that continue. Given the encouraging trend, the United Kingdom reiterates the proposal that the Council consider reducing the frequency with which we meet for these debates.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif for his briefing. We also welcome Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi back to the Council and thank them for their statements today.

The year 2013 was an important year for Belgrade and Pristina on their path towards normalizing relations. In order to maintain the positive momentum of last year, the full and more effective implementation of the 19 April Agreement should be an urgent priority. In that regard, we are pleased to note the tangible progress both sides have made in the European Union-facilitated high-level dialogue and its technical working group. Indeed, the Agreement has already led to a number of changes on the ground, such as the gradual transition of the police structures in northern Kosovo. Building upon such achievements, we look to Serbia and Kosovo to increase their efforts towards resolving the remaining differences, mainly in the areas of judiciary integration. We hope that the next round of the European Union-facilitated dialogue, to be held this week, will lead to mutually acceptable solutions on those issues.

We also welcome the successful conclusion of the second round of local elections in Kosovo. That is a milestone towards normalizing relations between the two sides and represents a big step towards regional peace and stability. We thank the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European

Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force for their indispensable contribution to ensuring a safe and secure electoral process throughout the country. At the same time, we strongly condemn the election-related violence and the killing of the member of the North Mitrovica Municipal Assembly. Such an attempt to derail hard-won progress cannot be tolerated and needs to be addressed decisively.

Another issue that must be considered in that context is the scepticism and resistance of ethnic Serbs. Winning their hearts and minds remains a challenging task, but is essential to building lasting peace. Achieving that will require time and good faith on all sides. In that connection, we would like to emphasize that the ongoing integration process in northern Kosovo should be fully inclusive and cohesive. Furthermore, as part of its efforts to build a harmonious, multi-ethnic society, Kosovo must uphold its commitment to protect the rights of ethnic minorities. In particular, further efforts are needed to foster a more conducive environment for the return of internally displaced persons. That should be done by facilitating their access to housing and basic services while ensuring the appropriate security. The new strategy on the reintegration of repatriated persons for the period 2014 to 2018, as approved by the Kosovo authorities, is a most welcome measure in that regard.

Before concluding, we would like to commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif and the entire team of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo for their valuable contribution to promoting stability in Kosovo and the region.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif for his briefing on developments in Kosovo during the reporting period. I also thank Prime Minister Ivica Dačić of Serbia and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

The current report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/68) shows that, while progress has been made in several areas, challenges still remain. Our contribution to today's debate will focus on three issues, namely, human rights, key political developments and the return of internally displaced persons.

On human rights, we welcome the organization of a technical meeting on 2 December to discuss the new draft Kosovo strategy on human rights for the period 2014 to 2018. We support the revitalization of non-judicial human rights institutions in Kosovo and acknowledge the vital role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international organizations in that process. The report indicates that the Kosovo authorities have not made progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the 2012 report of the Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo as these recommendations pertain to culture, education and other rights of minority communities. We urge the authorities to do more to promote and protect the rights of minorities in order to foster inclusiveness and strengthen cohesion. We commend UNMIK for its continued efforts, together with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and other stakeholders, to promote respect for human rights in Kosovo.

Concerning the key political developments, we welcome the continued implementation of measures to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo. We urge both sides to maintain their high levels of commitment to the process. The establishment of new democratic institutions through free and fair elections has been described as one of the key aspects of the First Agreement of 19 April 2013. That is why we take special note of the mayoral and municipal elections that took place in Kosovo on 3 November and 1 December. We furthermore note that the elections were peaceful, with the exception of those in North Mitrovica, where unidentified masked men ransacked two poling centres, and Pasjan, where ballot boxes were vandalized.

We applaud the zeal of the people of Kosovo for democracy, as evidenced by the increased turn-out of voters as compared to 2009. We consider it significant that voters residing outside Kosovo, in Serbia and Montenegro, were able to participate in the elections. We commend the OSCE for its efforts in that regard. We would also like acknowledge the positive role played by the Serbian leadership in support of mass participation in the elections in northern Kosovo and that of the OSCE in facilitating logistical arrangements for the elections despite the challenging circumstances.

With regard to displaced persons, we welcome the commitment of the Kosovo authorities to facilitating the return of Kosovo Serbs to their properties. We believe that is an important step in the overall integration of Serbs into Kosovo. We would, however, like to see the same commitment in the case of other minorities that have been displaced. We note from the report that

displaced persons who return face certain challenges, some of which amount to a violation of their human rights. In that regard, we call on the authorities to take measures to end the discrimination faced by returnees and to grant them better access to education.

We welcome the improvement in the policy framework for managing the integration of returning displaced persons with the approval, in October, of the strategy on the reintegration of repatriated persons for the period 2014 to 2018. We acknowledge the role that UNMIK has played in the return process in Kosovo and urge the Mission's leadership to remain engaged with authorities in Kosovo on that important issue.

I would like to conclude by commending UNMIK, under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif, for the admirable manner in which it is carrying out its mandate.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2014/68) and acknowledge the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif. We also welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and of Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

On the political front, we welcome the substantive progress made in implementing the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. The municipal elections of 3 November were held successfully in most of Kosovo for the first time under a single legislative framework, marking an important step in strengthening the process of normalization between the parties, which lays the basis for an association/community of Serbian municipalities.

It is now time, in the post-election phase, to consolidate the progress achieved. That means that future elected representatives must continue cooperating on the implementation of the Agreement between Belgrade and Pristina. We call on the parties to continue their efforts with regard to the application of the Agreement, to adopt confidence-building measures and to make progress in the process of reconciliation between communities.

With regard to reconciliation, the parties must now address pending issues. Those include determining the fate of persons who were disappeared or kidnapped, the protection of important religious and cultural sites in the Kosovo region and the definitive reintegration of internally displaced persons.

We reiterate the importance of continuing to implement resolution 1325 (2000) at all levels so as to guarantee women's participation in all areas of decision-making and to ensure that their needs are adequately met. In that regard, we highlight the need for further strengthening provisions emanating from that resolution, especially in the justice and security sectors.

We underscore the central role and important work carried out by the United Nations through UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights. The role of UNMIK is fundamental in this new phase of the implementation of the Agreement. It is important to continue mutual cooperation between the Mission and various actors, such as the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Kosovo Force and the international community. But such cooperation must always remain under the aegis of UNMIK. European Union cooperation has been crucial in facilitating the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations.

We are concerned by the occurrence of isolated incidents of violence in northern Kosovo during the elections and we condemn the assassination, on 16 January, of Mr. Dimitrije Janićijević, a newly elected member of the North Mitrovica Municipal Assembly. Such acts risk jeopardizing the agreement reached between the parties. We therefore support UNMIK's efforts to play a role of mediation and facilitation between municipal representatives and minority communities.

It is also important that the progress made in transitioning police structures in northern Kosovo be matched with progress in the judiciary so as to establish a unified judicial system. Likewise, efforts should continue in all other areas of the rule of law.

UNMIK could redouble its efforts on outstanding cases of disappeared individuals. That is a debt owed to the relatives of victims. In addition, the lack of progress with regard to accountability is striking in that context. As indicated at the Council's open debate on war and its lessons (see S/PV.7105), my country reiterates its offer to share its experiences in the painful task of searching for disappeared persons.

In conclusion, we underscore the importance of resolution 1244 (1999) as a basis and applicable guiding instrument for the Kosovo region to promote reconciliation, stability and prosperity for its communities.

Mr. Oyarzábal (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/68) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We likewise welcome the participation of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and of Mr. Hashim Thaçiç.

Argentina wishes to highlight, as is traditional, the fundamental role played by the Organization in Kosovo through UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, as well as its cooperation with the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission, all the while remaining status-neutral under the auspices of the United Nations.

It is worth recalling that Argentina voted in favour of resolution 1244 (1999), when we were also a member of the Security Council. We believe that the resolution continues to be the applicable international legal framework for Kosovo to reach a comprehensive solution through a political process and negotiations.

The importance of UNMIK was demonstrated once again with the conclusion of the electoral process in Kosovo. We agree with the Secretary-General that we should acknowledge the firm leadership shown by Belgrade and Pristina in the peaceful way in which that process unfolded, thereby sending firm political messages that allowed procedural irregularities to be overcome and the elections to be completed. At the same time, we must express our concern at the incidents of violence and intimidation which, although isolated and eventually overcome, did hinder the free expression and exercise of democratic rights.

We firmly condemn the brutal assassination of a member-elect of the North Mitrovica Municipal Assembly, and we join the call on all parties to cooperate closely in the investigation to identify those responsible and bring them to justice, as well as to do their utmost to prevent such incidents occurring in future.

We welcome the commitment of the parties to continuing the high-level dialogue under the auspices of the European Union and we highlight the significant progress made in the implementation of the historic 19 April 2013 Agreement. Nevertheless, we must continue to call for the pursuit of those efforts and the consolidation of the progress made in order to reach an agreement on the establishment on the association/community of Serbian municipalities.

A pending issue of particular sensitivity is the need to overcome delays and move forward in the transition of police structures in northern Kosovo, which should be accompanied by progress in the connected issue of the judiciary and other areas of the rule of law. The Republic of Serbia in particular has amply demonstrated its genuine commitment to the process of implementing the April 2013 Agreement. We encourage all international presences on the ground to continue cooperating in accordance with their respective mandates in order to contribute to the consolidation of achievements and the successful resolution of pending issues.

Although we are encouraged that the general security situation in Kosovo has been on the whole calm, we cannot fail to focus on the security situation in northern Mitrovica. In that context, we should reiterate that the important work of UNMIK continues to be essential in providing the greatest support possible to political processes, giving special attention to those issues related to the implementation of the 19 April Agreement.

Argentina believes that it is very important to achieve full respect for the human rights of displaced persons and members of minority groups so that they can return to their places of origin and accede to substantive rights and not be the victims of discrimination. We associate ourselves with the request of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of internally displaced persons to deal with discrimination, the high rates of unemployment, deficient access to education and the failure to return illegally seized properties, which continue to have negative effects on the return of internally displaced persons.

We are concerned that the rate of voluntary return continues to be relatively low, which demonstrates that it is essential to continue working to ensure the return and the permanent reintegration of internally displaced persons, while recognizing that the main obstacles to increasing that rate of return continue to be issues that are unresolved with regard to property, security problems and poor economic prospects.

It is also crucially important to continue to give priority to the tasks of overcoming the traces and legacy of the conflict, including pending cases of disappeared persons. Accordingly, we find it encouraging that UNMIK continues to support efforts to ascertain the fate of disappeared persons. We join the call for redoubled efforts and cooperation so that impunity is not the last word on grave violations of human rights.

We highlight the work being done by UNMIK in its efforts to support the rule of law, especially cooperation with all the pertinent interested parties with regard to the main problems on the ground. As currently indicated by the Secretary-General in his report, it is also key for international presences in the Kosovo to continue strengthening mutual cooperation in order to achieve the common goal of establishing appropriate conditions for the upcoming stages of the implementation of the 19 April 2013 Agreement.

We conclude by highlighting the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Omaish (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to welcome the Prime Minister of Republic of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, and thank them for their statements.

We have all witnessed genuine political progress in the relations between Pristina and Belgrade during 2013, which is reflected, above all, by the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, an agreement that was facilitated by the European Union (EU) in April 2013. Jordan believes that it is incumbent upon both parties to build on the momentum created by the Agreement and move forward decisively to address pending aspects. In that regard, we commend the ongoing direct dialogue under the auspices of the EU between the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, as well as the serious commitment shown by the parties during the meetings. We also commend the ongoing meetings of the technical working groups and their recent progress in implementing the agreement on the integral management of the check points.

Jordan believes that the EU has a key role to play in accelerating progress in the dialogue. While we commend the serious and continued efforts undertaken by the EU High Representative, Baroness Catherine Ashton, we believe that the European effort will not only help to overcome the challenges ahead, but also contribute to the promotion of a culture of dialogue and cooperation, stability and respect for human rights in the region.

Jordan welcomes the concluion of the second round of the mayoral elections in the municipalities in Kosovo, which were organized in a peaceful manner in early December 2013. Jordan also commends the international presence in all its forms in Kosovo for al! its efforts during each election rounds, in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which facilitated the holding of the elections in the northern municipalities as well as outside Kosovo. The elections held in different parts of the Republic of Kosovo, within a unique legislative framework and with participation by both local and international observers, were an important landmark on the path towards strengthening democratic institutions in Kosovo, as well as a necessary step towards achieving legitimate representation for local communities. The upcoming period will be crucial to strengthening the positive results of the elections.

Jordan read with great interest the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/68), particularly with respect to the security situation in Kosovo and the fact that the situation was relatively stable in the period under review, with a drop in crime rates. We regret the killing of the elected official in northern Mitrovica. We trust that that assassination will not have a negative impact on the political process.

We commend the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and support its activities. Jordan commends its ongoing efforts to facilitate the implementation of provisions on the rule of law in the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations.

Jordan believes that it is vital to address, continuously and seriously, all post-conflict issues that have a major impact on the psychological state of various local communities, such as the fate of missing persons and returnees, and the ethnic groups. In that regard, we welcome the commitment by the Kosovo authorities to facilitate the return of displaced Kosovo Serbs to their

homes, as expressed by Mr. Thaçi during his visit to the returning families in the village of Videjë/Vidanje on the occasion of the Orthodox Christmas. We hope that UNMIK and other international organizations will continue to contribute to finding solutions to all those issues in order to build trust and achieve stronger reconciliation in the region.

Jordan recognized Kosovo's independence in 2009. That independence is a de facto reality. We took note of all the positive developments that have taken place in Kosovo since the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999) and the deployment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

Therefore, We believe that it will be useful at this stage to give the parties more time in the periods between the quarterly reports of the Secretary-General and their discussions by the Security Council, in order to focus on dialogue and the implementation of the Agreement.

In conclusion, we express our appreciation for the efforts of to the Head of UNMIK and all its staff to implement the Mission's mandate in different areas.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif for his briefing. I welcome the presence of His Excellency Prime Minister Ivica Dačić of Serbia at this meeting and thank him for his statement. I also listened carefully to the statement of Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

We respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and understand the legitimate concerns of that country on the question of Kosovo. Resolution 1244 (1999) provides the essential legal basis for finding a solution to the question of Kosovo. China believes that the best approach in that connection is to find a mutually acceptable settlement through dialogue and negotiations on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant Council resolutions.

The current security situation in Kosovo is generally stable. The implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations has made positive progress. Local elections were held at the end of last year. Agreements were reached between Serbia and Kosovo on issues such as the integrated management of crossing points.

China appreciates the efforts of Serbia and of His Excellency Prime Minister Dačić to seek political solutions to the Kosovo issue. We encourage Belgrade and Pristina to continue pragmatic and constructive dialogue, effectively implement the agreements that have been signed, effectively protect the legitimate rights of the various communities and consolidate the gains made in order to enable the population to benefit from the dividends of peace and development as soon as possible, while contributing to peace and stability in the Balkans and Europe at large.

China commends the work carried out by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif and supports UNMIK's efforts to continue to discharge the Security Council's mandate. We hope that the international presences, such as UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, will strengthen their coordination and work in synergy so as to play a positive and constructive role in facilitating a solution to the question of Kosovo.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and Mr, Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minsiter of Kosovo, for their statements.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/68) takes stock of the historic year of 2013. The 19 April 2013 Agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, concluded under the auspices of the European Union and the High Representative, is an unprecedented step in the normalization of relations between those two countries. I also congratulate the parties on their tireless pursuit of dialogue since that time. The hopes kindled in the spring have been borne out by reality.

Another landmark event in recent months was the holding of the municipal elections throughout Kosovo. For the first time, all voters in Kosovo went to the polls in a unique constitutional context. The relatively high turnout through the territory, while slightly lower north of the Ibar River, shows the progressive ownership by the Serb population of the Kosovo institutional system. Such events reflect the launching of a momentum both at the bottom and at the highest level of Kosovar society.

In his report, the Secretary-General of course calls on us to look towards the year ahead. In a context marked by elections, the positive trend must continue. It is incumbent upon us to remain mindful of continued

dialogue and the political developments of the two States.

In that regard, we will continue to focus on the milestones of the implementation of the 19 April 2013 Agreement between Pristina and Belgrade. Two aspects are rightly underscored in the report of the Secretary-General, that is, the ongoing dismantling of the Serb parallel structures in northern Kosovo and their integration into Kosovar institutions, as well as the establishment of an association/community of Serb municipalities with genuine powers. Those two processes are inseparable.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report, an increasing number of former Serb police officers from northern Kosovo are signing up to the Kosovo police. That is a sign of the success of the dialogue between the two parties on that issue.

In addition, we call on both parties to continue discussing the establishment of the judicial structures, which will also help to promote trust among the local population in that new institutional framework.

Finally, we encourage the parties to promote the protection of minorities on the ground. The low number of refugees returning to Kosovo remains a cause for concern. Restoring mutual trust between the communities remains the only way for Kosovo and Serbia to open together a new chapter in their history, firmly focused on peace and regional cooperation.

The decision to open European Union accession negotiations with Serbia, on the one hand, and to authorize the European Commission to negotiate a stabilization and association agreement with Kosovo, on the other hand, should also start to be implemented in 2014. Normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo was set by the European Union as a common criterion for their respective European integration. We must now ensure that both parties remain constructively committed in the long term to improving their relations.

The year 2014 will also be the year of the strategic review of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. That review should take into account developments in the regional context on the one hand and, on the other, the desire of the Kosovo authorities to take on more responsibility in the context of the rule of law. It will therefore be in a context of greater partnership that the Union will seek to help Kosovo in strengthening its institutions, which is vital on its path to European integration.

All of those positive developments should be noted by the international community. It is time for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to adapt its presence to the situation on the ground, in agreement with the Kosovar authorities and based on their effective needs.

Finally, like others have said during this meeting, we believe that the Security Council's follow-up on this issue should reflect to a greater extent the reality of the relations between the parties and that we should look into reducing the frequency of debates on this issue.

Ms. King (Australia): We thank Special Representative Zarif for his briefing and for his leadership of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We also thank Prime Minister Dačić and Prime Minister Thaçi for providing their valuable perspectives on developments in Kosovo over the past three months.

Australia applauds the substantial progress achieved at the political level by the two Prime Ministers at their recent meetings on the implementation of the 19 April Agreement on normalizing relations. We also recognize and commend the ongoing mediation efforts of European Union High Representative Ashton. We commend the efforts of both Serbia and Kosovo in implementing key aspects of the 19 April Agreement, including the significant progress made in the integration of Serbian Interior Ministry personnel into the Kosovo police. That is a delicate task that, when completed, will strengthen security and stability in Kosovo.

We also welcome the holding, during November and December last year, of mayoral and municipal assembly elections. In accordance with the 19 April Agreement, those elections were the first under a single legislative framework and included, crucially, the four northern Kosovo municipalities. While marred by some security incidents, the elections are a testament to the resolve of the Kosovo authorities to build a democratic, multi-ethnic future for their nation.

We urge the peaceful, fair conduct of elections for the mayor of northern Mitrovica, scheduled to take place later this month.

The efforts made to normalize relations have allowed Serbia and Kosovo to move forward on their respective paths towards closer European integration.

For Serbia, the inaugural round of accession talks with the European Union in January and, in parallel, the European Commission signalling its intention to conclude negotiations for a stabilization and association agreement with Kosovo during 2014 are both historic decisions that recognize the efforts made by Prime Minister Dačić and Prime Minister Thaçi towards reconciliation between Serbia and Kosovo and stability and prosperity within Kosovo itself.

While commending the progress made to date, we note that further work remains to implement several key aspects of the 19 April Agreement. It will be important, for example, to reach agreement on the statute and establishment of the community/association of Serb municipalities. More work also remains to be done in northern Kosovo to establish a functional system of courts. We hope that both Prime Ministers will be able to make progress on this issue when they meet later this week in Brussels.

Australia is encouraged by the fact that the overall security situation remained generally calm in Kosovo over the reporting period, particularly the fact that the number of reported incidents affecting minority communities decreased when compared with the previous reporting period. We condemn the shooting of Dimitrije Janicijevic, a newly elected Serb assembly member, in Mitrovica on 16 January. We welcome the Kosovo authorities' pledge to investigate his murder and create a safe environment in northern Mitrovica.

We remain concerned at the fact that the rate of voluntary returns continues to be relatively low, and we encourage Kosovo's authorities to continue to address discrimination and work towards better education and employment opportunities, especially for minority groups and returnees. In this context, we also urge Kosovo to take concrete steps to protect the cultural and religious heritage sites recently listed by Kosovo's Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

The year 2013 was undoubtedly a positive year for relations between Serbia and Kosovo. We encourage both Prime Ministers to continue to engage constructively in the year ahead in the EU-mediated dialogue and with UNMIK to tackle any further challenges to achieve full normalization of relations. With 2014 an election year in both Serbia and Kosovo, we hope that both parties will maintain the same pace of political dialogue and continue to strengthen the stability and prosperity of Kosovo.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I should like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing, and we commend the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under his leadership. I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo to the Council today. We thank both of them for the statements they made today.

In the political arena, Rwanda welcomes the completion of municipal elections in Kosovo last December. It is indeed an important step in the implementation of the 19 April Agreement between Belgrade and Pristina.

Despite the minor challenges observed during the elections, the good cooperation between the Kosovo authorities and the local Kosovo Serb representatives, which has led to the success of the elections, is very commendable. I will use this occasion to congratulate Mr. Ivica Dačić and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their evident leadership with regard to the success observed in the implementation of the Agreement. We especially commend them for having continued to engage under the facilitation of the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton. We are confident that with the kind of political will and spirit exhibited by the parties, they will reach a common understanding on their most controversial outstanding issues.

On the security situation, while we note that Kosovo remained generally calm, we strongly condemn the murder of an elected member of the northern Mitrovica municipal council near his residence on 16 January. We are aware that the Kosovo authorities, the local Kosovo Serb representatives and the Serbian Government condemn this murder, and we stress that it is imperative that all parties concerned work together in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.

On human rights, we took note of the lack of progress in the implementation of the Ombudsperson recommendations, in particular those related to culture, education, access and representation in the media for minority communities. We call on the Kosovo authorities to pay special attention to issues facing minorities. We welcome the technical meeting organized by the "office of good governance within the Office of the Prime Minister" on 2 December 2013 to discuss the new draft Kosovo strategy on human rights 2014-2018. We

believe that the participation of international partners in this discussion, given their expertise, contributed to the drafting of a comprehensive strategy on human rights. We commend all partners, including UNMIK, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, UN-Women, the European Office in Kosovo and the Council of Europe for their participation in this discussion.

On the return of displaced persons, we value the assessment made by the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Mr. Chaloka Beyani, who visited Kosovo in October last year. We commend the positive developments related to legislation and policy, and we believe that the Kosovo authorities, together with other stakeholders, including donors, should work together to address the identified challenges to the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons. There is a particular need for concerted efforts to tackle discrimination, high unemployment rates, poor access to education and the repossession of illegally occupied properties. We believe that the solutions sought for the issues identified will need to increase the number of voluntary and safe returns of displaced persons to their homes.

In the same vein, I commend the gesture made by Mr. Thaçi, who visited two returned families on 7 January on the occasion of Orthodox Christmas, and the commitment he made to facilitate the return of Kosovo Serb displaced persons to their homes and properties. On the other hand, we regret to see that, once again, the Rahovec municipality has not begun to implement the Law on the Village of Velika Hoča, despite continued pressure by the central authorities and the international community. There is no doubt that the persistence of that issue will continue to undermine good coexistence between both communities.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to commend the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo for its invaluable contribution in monitoring and advising in the area of the rule of law. Rwanda has taken note of the report of the report of the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (S/2014/68, annex I) in that area.

I also commend the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for its continued contribution. It is very important that the European Union and UNMIK continue their assistance to the people of Kosovo in that regard.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for his introduction of the report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2014/68). I also thank Prime Minister Thaçi and Mr. Dačić on their presentations.

My delegation commends the various actors involved in the promotion of peace, stability and respect for the rule of law in Kosovo and the entire region, namely, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union, which are working in close cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo on the ground.

The report of the Secretary-General shows that substantial progress has been made at the political level, thanks to the political will of Pristina and Belgrade to implement the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between the two parties.

Municipal elections have now been held in the various towns. We welcome that political progress, which the international community should encourage. However, the report mentions political conflicts in northern Kosovo, where opponents of the Brussels Agreement between Pristina and Belgrade conducted a protest march against the election campaign. We urgently call on all the parties involved to engage in an open dialogue to find a lasting and acceptable political solution.

With regard to security, the report refers to a net decrease in the rate of intercommunity crime and violence. We encourage the authorities to continue in their role in maintaining public order. My delegation congratulates the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo for the activities it carries out to strengthen the capacity of the ministries involved in the maintenance and promotion of internal peace and security.

With regard to human rights, the report also underscores the difficulties in implementing the recommendations on the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. We encourage Kosovar leaders to create conditions conducive to the return of those people to their places of origin, as well as to organize their social reintegration and the recovery of goods

to the original owners, which will make it possible to build confidence among the various communities.

In conclusion, Chad would like to commend the important continuing role played by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the other actors in the Kosovo crisis. In that regard, Chad urges the international community, in particular the Security Council, to support the Mission until the conclusion of its stabilization mandate in Kosovo.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I, too, welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo Farid Zarif and thank him for his briefing. I welcome as well His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, and thank them for their presentations.

On 3 November 2013, municipal elections were held for the first time throughout the territory of Kosovo under Kosovo law, in implementation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Despite a few incidents, the commitment of political officials on both sides and the significant support provided by international partners, in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, ensured the success of the municipal elections, including in the four municipalities in northern Kosovo. We are confident that all the necessary measures will be taken for the partial election of 23 February to determine the mayor of northern Mitrovica also takes place under the best conditions possible. Once that phase has been completed, we encourage Serbian and Kosovar leaders to reach an agreement as soon as possible on the modalities for the establishment of Serb-majority municipalities as. In so doing, the provisions of the historic Agreement of 19 April 2013 will have full effect.

In addition to the municipal elections, the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, has led to progress in terms of the progressive dismantling of parallel structures, in particular within the police, and in terms of the management of border crossings, with the introduction of new procedures for the collection of customs duties. We hope that the next round of the dialogue, to take place in Brussels on 12 February, will be an opportunity to make progress in the area of justice arrangements.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina must necessarily be accompanied by the energetic pursuit of reforms aimed at ensuring the rule of law in Kosovo. The European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) continues to play a key role in three areas: first, in helping the Kosovo authorities to strengthen their institutions; secondly, in fighting organized crime and corruption; and, lastly, in prosecuting the perpetrators of war crimes and combating impunity for the most serious crimes, including those related to allegations of organ trafficking.

Luxembourg attaches particular importance to the fate of the 1,721 people who are still listed as missing since the end of the conflict in Kosovo. We welcome the fact that, with the support of EULEX and in the presence of the authorities of Kosovo and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Serbian authorities began excavation work in December along the Rudnica road in the municipality of Raška, Serbia, where a mass grave was discovered. The case having been assigned to an examining magistrate, we now encourage the recovery of remains as soon as possible to allow the families of the deceased to establish the fate of their relatives.

As important elections lie ahead in 2014, I wish to pay tribute to the two Prime Ministers for their perseverance and political courage. I also want to congratulate the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Catherine Ashton, for the skill and efficiency with which she continues to facilitate the high-level dialogue. The opening of European Union accession negotiations with Serbia, on 21 January, and the continuation of negotiations with a view to concluding a stabilization and association agreement between the European Union and Kosovo must inevitably encourage Belgrade and Pristina to resolutely and irreversibly move towards reforms and the normalization of their relations.

At the level of the Security Council, given the new situation on the ground, which is characterized by a lasting stabilization of the security situation and increased involvement by the European Union, we share the view voiced previously by our colleagues from the United States, the United Kingdom, Jordan and France that the time has come to review the frequency with which the Security Council addresses the situation in Kosovo and the activities of UNMIK. Undoubtedly, there is a need to consider adapting the presence of the international community on the ground in the medium

term. As the European perspective of Serbia and Kosovo materializes in the years to come, the need for United Nations involvement in Kosovo will diminish. We call on the leaders and citizens of the two countries to continue to demonstrate the necessary commitment and courage to achieve their common European future. Luxembourg is committed to supporting them along that path.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Lithuania.

I would like to start by thanking Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for his briefing. I would also like to thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo for their statements.

Today, the Security Council meets for the third time since the historic Agreement between Belgrade and Pristina of 19 April 2013. Much has happened during that period. With regard to the 15-point Agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, many elements of the implementation plan have already been addressed. Lithuania encourages the political leaders on both sides to continue pursuing the path of reconciliation and to sustain progress in resolving outstanding issues.

Last December, under the Lithuanian presidency, the Council of the European Union approved the negotiation mandate for accession negotiations with Serbia, with accession negotiations having started on 21 January of this year. Negotiations on a stabilization and association agreement with Kosovo have also started. The mediation efforts of the European Union and the transformative impact of the prospects of European integration are having a clear effect on both parties to the Agreement. Last year's mayoral and municipal elections in Kosovo were the first to be held in all municipalities in Kosovo under a single legislative framework. The upcoming by-elections in North Mitrovica on 23 February should conclude that crucial electoral process. We appreciate the role of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other relevant actors in the facilitation of those elections. At the same time, we would like to note that a broader electoral reform in Kosovo needs to be completed before the legislative elections later this year.

Besides creating opportunities, progress in European integration and the 15-point Agreement require concrete efforts and results to be delivered in a reasonable time frame. Exchanges of liaison officers, progress in the area of integrated border management, police and customs collections are a few good examples. The integration of the judiciary, the proper implementation of the agreements on energy and telecommunications and the uniform application of Kosovar law throughout the territory are some of the areas where further progress is needed. In that regard, the continued assistance of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) is indispensable. We acknowledge the important role that EULEX continues to play in strengthening the rule of law. Specific focus should now be given to the full integration of the rule of law and municipal institutions in the north under a single Kosovo jurisdiction.

Five months ago, during an ambush attack on a vehicle carrying EULEX Kosovo staff members, the first of the kind since its deployment in 2008, a Lithuanian customs officer was killed. Lithuania calls on all the relevant authorities to cooperate with a view to bringing the perpetrators of that act to justice.

Lithuania welcomes the role that EULEX continues to play in the fight against organized crime and corruption, the prosecution of war crimes and the fight against impunity.

The final objectives of the 19 April Agreement are still to be met, but the political landscape has changed fundamentally. The new realities need to be taken into account, and that has already been done by the European Union and NATO. We encourage the two sides and their leaders to continue showing the decisiveness necessary to bring about that common European future and to contribute to the stability in the region. The progress in the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo can trigger positive spillover effects on the neighbouring countries.

In view of important progress on the ground, we would be favourable to reviewing the reporting cycles at the Council — as has already been mentioned by the representatives of the United States, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, Jordan and France — with a view to reducing the frequency of such meetings.

I would also stress the importance of strengthened coordination among international actors on the ground, in particular the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE.

Broad support from all communities in Kosovo and Serbia for all actions taken by their leaders towards the

normalization of relations and the European perspective is vital to success. The international community should remain fully engaged and supportive of the efforts by the parties to sustain the progress achieved so far.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Thaçi has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Thaçi (*spoke in Albanian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I should like to add a comment with regard the return of refugees to their homes and property.

The return of displaced persons — Serbs — to their homes and property is continuing. As the country's Prime Minister, I personally have visited them and talked with them. We have created security conditions to accommodate them to enable their return to their homes and to their property. I personally encourage them to return to the entire territory of the Republic of Kosovo. I am fully confident in saying that the process will continue and that all institutions in Kosovo, at the national as well as the local levels, will be ready to assist returnees.

As for the conflict in Syria, not only Kosovo but also other countries in the region have had volunteers go there to fight. As Prime Minister, I am very proud to say that last week we adopted legislation forbidding the participation of Kosovo citizens in the conflict in Syria, or in other countries.

As for the continuing dialogue, I want to stress that it has produced tangible results for Kosovo in bettering the lives of its citizens and facilitating the path towards European integration. The dialogue has brought about improvements in relations between Kosovo and Serbia and sent a message to the region. The Government of Kosovo will continue the dialogue in 2014, including by addressing other issues that may be of importance or concern to help improve our neighbourly relations. I would also like to stress that the Republic of Kosovo has respected all the agreements made so far, and we call on Serbia to increase its commitment to implementing all the agreements reached in Brussels.

On 14 December, we started to implement the agreement on collecting taxes on the border. We have also consulted a managing board on establishing a fund to develop the municipalities in northern Kosovo. At our next meeting, which will take place in Brussels on 12 February, we will discuss the justice system based on, and in accordance with, the 19 April Agreement. The State of Kosovo will act responsibly in the dialogue to normalize the bilateral inter-State relations with Serbia.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.